

# Man

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(R. L. Allan)

The incorrigibleness of man under all persuasions becomes the ground of the necessity, and the vindication of the righteousness, of God's judgment.

Isaiah says, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more." And Jeremiah had to say of the generation in his day, "Thou has stricken them, but they have not grieved;" and again, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" Are we then to wonder that the sword of the Chaldean entered the land?

The generation in the day of Christ was tested in every way. John mourned, the Son of man piped; but there was neither lamentation nor dancing. In His own person, the Lord assayed Israel in every way, according to their own prophets. He came as the Bethlehemite, according to Micah, but they sought His life. (Matt. 2) He came as the light from the land of Zebulon and Naphthali, according to Isaiah; but He was challenged instead of followed. (Matt. 4) He came as the King, meek and lowly, according to Zechariah, but they received Him not. (Matt. 21)

Then in the three parables, which the Lord delivers at the close of these testings of Israel (see Matt. 21, 22), I mean those of the two sons, the husbandman of the vineyard, and the marriage of the king's son, He convicts His people under the law, under the ministry of John Baptist, and under grace.

Are we not, therefore, prepared to see the Master rise up to shut to the door? The need of sovereign grace, as well as the vindication of judgment, is made to appear. "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma," Man is past moral correction. He is incorrigible and incurable.

It has been said of him, "Man is prone to evil, and this arises from the impotency of the will, which, when it turns to evil, is rather passive than active. Through the grace of Christ alone is it free." Very just, Not only has man fallen from God, and become a sinner, but he is the *bondman of sin*. Having been overcome of Satan, he has been brought into bondage to him. (2 Peter 2) He is "sold under sin." (Rom. 7)

And this state of incurableness and incorrigibleness has had a constant illustration in the book of God, from the beginning to the end. Man has shown himself to be in full bondage to sin, so that he will go in the way of it, in defiance of every argument and every influence which may be used with him.

It is solemn to look at this; but it has its profit for us to do so. We can be at no difficulty to trace a line of these illustrations all through Scripture.

*Cain* went on with the desperate purpose of his heart, though the Lord came and personally pleaded with him, to turn him from his purpose. (Gen. 4)

*Nimrod* made Babel the centre of his empire, though God's judgment had just before so awfully signalized that place. (Gen. 10)

*Pharaoh* repented not to yield himself under God's hand, though that hand had given witness after witness of its supremacy, and that it was vain to kick against the pricks. (Ex. 1 - 14)

*Amalek* fought with Israel, though the glory in the pillar and the water from the rock were before him, the witnesses of God's wondrous majesty and power. (Ex. 17)

*Israel* murmured and rebelled again and again, in the midst of divine marvels and mercies, which spoke to them of love and almightiness. (Numbers.)

*Nebuchadnezzar* exalted himself after so many witnesses of God's power and so many gracious, softened movements of his own heart. (Dan. 4: 30.)

*Judas* betrayed the Lord after years of converse with him. (Matt. 26)

*The High Priest* invented a lie, in the face of a rent veil; the Roman soldiers consented to that lie, in the face of a rent tomb. (Matt. 28)

*The Jews* stoned Stephen, though his face was shining, under their eye, like the face of an angel. (Acts 7)

These are among the samples or instances of the fact that man, by nature, is under bondage to sin, and that no moral influence is powerful enough to work his deliverance. The creature that has proved itself able to withstand such arguments and persuasives as these cases exhibit, has proved itself to be beyond the reach of all moral influence. Hell itself would not cure him or deter him. Man is incorrigible and incurable. Again, we may say with Isaiah, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." Sovereign grace and power must home in. If God have not a seed it will all be Sodom.

*The Apocalypse*, closing the Book of God, closes also this testimony against man. There, in the face of the most awful judgments, executed again and again, man refuses to repent, going on the rather to ripen his iniquity, like Pharaoh of old, upon whom plague after plague spent themselves all in vain. And thus, we may say, this book of the Apocalypse (which is eminently a book of divine judgments, judgments not on Israel only, but on the whole world) is the vindication or justification, as well as the history, of judgment. We read there of judgments; but we learn, at the same time, the necessity and demand for judgment. For the incorrigibility of man, the desperate hardness of the heart, is fully exposed again. It is Pharaoh refusing to repent, Amalek defying and insulting the glory, or man as well as Israel saying, "Where is the God of judgment?" Man is found to be the same from first to last. The Ethiopian has not changed his skin nor the leopard his spots.

Are we then, I still ask, to wonder that the Lord's hand is still stretched out? that vials, trumpets, and seals have still to usher forth the judgments of God, and that the sword of Him who sits upon the white horse has still to do its work of death?

Judgment is God's *strange* work, but it is His *needed* work likewise. "Is there not a cause?" we may surely say, when we have looked at these cases and read the history of the trial of man's heart from the beginning to the end of it. And I am sure it is well for the soul to hold this fact, this truth about man and his incorrigibility in remembrance; for, as I have been observing, it so justifies the thought of divine judgment, and so tells us of the necessity of sovereign grace and the interference of divine power.

Judgments are to introduce the kingdom. The earth is to be conducted into a scene of glory by the taking out of it all that offends and does iniquity. For as grace has been despised, and the Lord who made the world has been disowned and cast out of the world, judgment must clear it ere it can be the scene of His glory and joy. But "the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."